Story of A Methodist Pastor

T. H. TRIBUNE-STAR. Sun., June 3, '62

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

A FEW YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH Rev. Albert Wesley Shields wrote the story of his ministry from 1898 to 1951. During that time he served 14 churches in 45 years, built four churches was was stationed at Paragon, Becker, Winslow, Lindenville, Freedom, Riley, Monroe City, Cory, North Terre Haute, Sandborn, Bicknell, Lagootee and Shelburn within the Indiana Conference of Methodist churches.

Rev. Shields was born in Monroe County, Indiana, in 1875. His grandfather, Tilghman Shields, was a blacksmith and preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. His grandmother, Letitia Swindler Shields died when Rev. Shield"s father was only a few weeks old, so he and his sister Jane were reared by Benjamin Browning and his family.

Dorothy J. Clark

Rev. Shields' grandparents on his mother's side were John and Betsy Ann (Peters) Grayson whose children included: Newton, Mary Jane, Marck, Henry, Tom and Margaret.

Rev. Shields' parents lived at Leesville, Bloomington, and other places in Monroe County, Indiana. The father ran off and joined the Union Army during the Civil War, serving in Company H, One Hundred Twentieth Regiment.

Rev. Shields was the seventh of eleven children: John, who died in infancy; Henry Newton; Ulysses Alfred; twins who died in infancy; unnamed son died at birth; Albert Wesley; Sarah Eleanor; Eliza Katie; Wm. Edgar, and Zelpha Letitia.

In the fall of 1876 the Shields family lived near Bloomington. The father owned a team and hauled tan bark, staves and lumber. He also did carpenter work, farm work and was employed for a time in a chair factory. Later in life (he lived to be near ninety) he became janitor at the city school and the city hall.

Move to Farm.

About 1880 the family moved to a farm a few miles out of Bloomington on the Columbus Pike (East 3rd street) where young Albert attended the Parks School two miles southeast. In the fall of 1881 he entered first grade in the Central High School Building on South College avenue and continued until 1894.

Rev. Shields remembered very well the "long willow switches grown in the school yard for disciplinary purposes." His teacher was Emma Baxter who punished him for laughing out loud in class at a funny picture drawn on the slate of the boy seated in front of him.

He remembered how he and his brother Alfred ran a popcorn wagon on the southwest corner of the Public Square near the old Town Pump. They bought more than a ton of rice popcorn from seed store in Chicago and at Christmas time made hundreds of popcorn balls for Sunday School treats. This helped the family finances.

Epworth League Worker.

In 1889 he joined the College Avenue ME Church at Bloomington, whose minister was the Rev. Wm. Riley Halstead, and became active in the Epworth League Chapter 1017. Many students at IU attended.

About 1896 he helped Rev. J. H. Garrison organize a Sunday School in South Park, south of Bloomington near the Monon Railroad switchyards. Next year he assisted Rev. James B. Likely at the Erie Church and because of his work was voted an exhorter's license. In 1898 he was given a license to preach by the District Conference and was put in charge of the Mt. Zion and Ridge Chapel in Paragon, a small town in Monroe county. Here services were held in the Christian Church until two years later when the Methodists built a small church seating two hundred. A few of the faithful went into the nearby woods, cut timber into blocks, hauled them to a shingle factory a few miles away, then took the shingles to church and nailed them on the roof. Rev. Shields' salary was set at $200 per year.

signed to Decker Chapel.

His second charge assigned in 1900 was at Decker Chapel which included services at Carnahan's Schoolhouse, New Bethel across the Wabash river via St. Francesville, Illinois, Barakman Chapel five miles east of Vincennes, and in the River Deshee bottoms in the community called "Hell's Neck." Rev. Shields drove a new horse and a two-wheeled cart to cover this territory over roads deep with black muck in winter and spring and deep sand in the summer season.

In 1902 he was put in charge of five churches in Warrick county. This was the year he married and in 1905 had a daughter, and was ordained and elder thus completing a four-year course of study. He was sent to Freedom, Indiana, in charge of four churches: Freedom, Oak Grove, New Bethel west of Spencer, and Hedding's Chapel, six miles across the White River south of Spencer. At Freedom he conducted seventy funerals, forty weddings, and baptized one hundred in 1910. His salary was $600 and a house. It was also this year his wife died leaving him with a five-year daughter.

A year later he was sent to Riley and in due time married Emma Gosnell. In his memoirs he spoke of the wedding on the front porch to accomodate the crowd and the "treat" he provided of half a wagon load of watermelons.

For several years the Ladies Aid Society had been working to accumulate funds for a new church and had bought a full solid oak seating to put in the old church plus a $300 nest egg. "The new church replaced one built by the Christian Church group many years before . . . with Riley I had the Hamilton Church three miles out southwest . . . the Plymouth Church out seven miles northeast of Riley . . . the day of the automobile came and in 1910 there were four autos in Riley township . . ."

Sent to Monroe City.

In 1913 Rev. Shields was sent to Monroe City in Knox County where he became ill in 1915 and left his charge, moving back to a little house

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SHIELDS, REV. ALBERT WESLEY

one mile west of Riley on the Gosnell property. They lived there four years and bought a small fruit farm three miles south of Cory, Ind.

Even though he was retired until 1920, Rev. Shields did supply work at the Park Ave. Church in North Terre Haute, Asbury Church just out of Brazil, and the Clay Prairie Church south of Brazil. In the Cory community was the New Light Church two miles south of the Gomery cemetery. Plans were made and the building moved to a new site and Rev. Shields preached the first funeral there since he lived only only three-fourths of a mile away.

In 1922 the Shields sold their farm and moved to Terre Haute, but four years later returned to Riley and Mt. Pleasant churches. Two years later the church burned and was rebuilt in one year's time. In 1930 he was sent to the Sandborn charge with three churches: Sandborn, Edwardsport and Marco—"The first parsonage with a furnace . . . never a bathroom anywhere . . ." From there he served Asbury Chapel, conducted 82 funerals, 35 weddings and 39 baptisms in Loogootee and Hindostan, and then to Shelburn until he became ill and retired permanently in 1942, returning to Terre Haute to spend the rest of his life in and out of hospitals, after 45 years as a Methodist circuit-riding minister.

Clergy (Ind.) Clark, Dorothy Community Affairs File

Lueken was Lutheran minister

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Historically speaking

By Dorothy J. Clark

When Terre Haute was only 30 years old, its population was suddenly swelled by the arrival of several immigrants from East Friesland and other parts of Germany. One of the larger groups crossed the Atlantic in the sailing ship "Victoria" and continued the inland journey from New Orleans to Evansville on a Mississippi river boat. The last 109 miles of their long journey was made on foot, and the stalwart young Frieslanders arrived in Terre Haute on Nov. 10, 1846.

One of the immigrants was a Lutheran schoolmaster, Arnd H. Lueken, who had conducted Sunday services on the journey across. These worship services were continued at the request of the group, and other German-speaking people of the town attended.

As the number of immigrants increased, Lueken was formally called as minister, ordained by the Indianapolis Synod. He became the first Lutheran preacher in Terre Haute, as well as the first Lutheran missionary in western Indiana.

In 1848 he rode horseback to Lafayette to organize the Lutheran congregation there. The following year he traveled to Linton and to Vincennes. April 3, 1848, Lueken organized the Terre Haute people who had called him, but this organization did not last, for it included not only Lutherans, but also Reformed, and still others quite indifferent to doctrine.

This organization was called "The German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church." In 1851 Lueken resigned the pastorate, and was succeeded by Pastor Kuester and Pastor Lautenschlager. The first meetings were held in Carr's Hall, southwest corner of Fourth and Walnut streets, and in the Court House. The church was built in 1852 on South Fourth between Swan and Oak streets.

The Rev. C. Becker was called in 1854, and the Rev. F. W. Steffens in 1857. It was during his ministry that the two factions of the church formally separated on Nov. 19, 1857. The Lutherans were given $750, while the Reformed kept the church building.

Later on, when the Reformed congregation built a new church at Eighth and Ohio streets, the old church was sold to the Jewish residents and converted into Temple Israel.

The Lutherans established their own congregation, holding the first meeting Jan. 25, 1858. H. W. Rinker was called May 2, 1858, and the following month was ordained and installed. July 1, 1858, a constitution was adopted which was last until 1920.

Charter members included Pastor Rinker, A. H. Lueken, Ernst Meissel, Rickert U. Frerichs, J. H. Lueken, M. H. Bargmann, Frederick Piepenbrink, William Bergmann, Oeje Ennen and Henricus Gravemeyer.

The first meetings were held at Carr's Hall, but plans for building a new church were made. A 75-foot lot at the northwest corner of Fourth and Swan was purchased. The carpenter shop on the lot was moved to the rear of the property, converted into a parsonage, and used for that purpose until 1886. The church was dedicated in 1860 and served as church and school until 1886.

The Rev. Rinker resigned in 1864, to be succeeded by Oskar Schmidt, the Rev. E. Sitzmann in 1874, and the Rev. Henry Katt in 1879. He served until his death in 1918, and was succeededby his son, Arthur F. Katt, who served until 1925.

When the old church buildings became inadequate, the congregation built a new church at Center and Poplar streets. The lot was purchased in 1884, and through the generosity of Mrs. Caroline Wahler and others ground was broken April 13, 1885, the cornerstone laid Jan. 28, 1886, and the structure dedicated Oct. 10, 1886.

Before World War I, church services were given entirely in the German language. The old-time custom of the men sitting on the left and the women on the right of the church was strictly adhered to by the members. English services began in 1914.

In 1925, the Rev. Frederick C. Jordan came to Immanuel and served for 30 years until his death in 1955 when the Rev. Arnold F. Kluge was installed.

The Lutheran parochial school was founded in 1858 by the first pastor, the Rev. H. W. Rinker. Other teachers included F. Fathauer, 1859-61; Rinker, 1861-64; Lueken, 1864-69; C. Beutenmiller, 1865-1867; Schmidt, 1869-73; A. Krueger, 1874-76; M. Grosse, 1876-83; J. Wisback, 1883-90; D. Meibohm, 1890-92; Julius Trapp, 1892-95; Fred Rechlin, 1895-1918; and Martin Braunschweiger, 1921-46.

Mr. Rechlin was a noted organist and choir director, and taught school for 23 years. His brother, Edward Rechlin, became internationally famous as a concert organist who interpreted and popularized the works of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Some of the "old pioneers" of the church lived to advanced ages. These good German citizens and their 137-year-old church played an important role in Terre Haute's growth and development. They included George J. Kadel, Jacob Bechtel, Carl Wirth, Christopher Leibing, Reinder Zimmerman, Ede Hausmann and Ude U. Frerichs.

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The travels of Rev. Shields

He and faithful spread gospel through area

T s MAR 0 8 1987

Clark, Dorothy

Historically speaking

Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

The life of one early Methodist minister probably was similar in many ways to the lives of all who were active in the Indiana Conference. During his ministry, from 1898 to 1951, the Rev. Albert Wesley Shields served 14 churches in 45 years, built four churches and was stationed at Paragon, Decker, Winslow, Lindenville, Bicknell, Loogootee and Shelburn.

He was born in Monroe County in 1875, the seventh son of 11 children born to his parents. Two sons and twins died young. The surviving children were Henry Newton, Ulysses Alfred, Albert Wesley, Sarah Eleanor, Eliza Kate, William Edgar and Zelpha Letitia.

His father ran off and joined the Union Army during the Civil War, serving in Company H, 120th Indiana Regiment. His paternal grandparents were Tilghman Shields, a blacksmith and preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Letitia (Swindler) Shields, who died when his father was only a few weeks old, so he and a sister were reared by Benjamin Browning and his family.

His maternal grandparents were John and Betsy Ann (Peters) Grayson whose children were Newton, Mary Jane, Marck, Henry, Tom and Margaret.

The Shields family lived near Bloomington in the fall of 1876. His father owned a team and hauled tan bark, staves and lumber, did carpenter work, farm work, and, for a time, was employed in a chair factory. He lived to be 90 years old, and later in life served as janitor at the city school and the city hall.

About 1880 the family moved to a farm a few miles from Bloomington on the Columbus Pike, or East Third Street, where young Albert attended Parks School two miles southeast. The next year he entered first grade in the Central High School building on South College Avenue and continued until 1894. He remembered his teacher, Emma Baxter, who used long willow switches for disciplinary purposes.

He and his brother, Alfred, ran a popcorn wagon on the southwest corner of the public square near the old town pump. They bought more than a ton of rice popcorn from a seed store in Chicago and at Christmastime made hundreds of popcorn balls for Sunday School treats to help family finances.

In 1889 he joined the College Avenue M. E. Church at Bloomington and became active in Epworth League, Chapter No. 1017. Many Indiana University students attended. The minister was the Rev. William Riley Halstead.

Shields helped the Rev. J. H. Garrison organize a Sunday School in South Park, south of Bloomington near the Monon Railroad switchyards in 1896. The next year he assisted the Rev. James B. Likely at the Erie Church and was voted an exhorter's license because of his work.

In 1898 he was given a license to preach by the District Conference and was put in charge of Mt. Zion and Ridge Chapel in Paragon, a small town in Monroe County. Services were held in the Christian Church for two years until the Methodists built a small church seating 200 two years later.

A few of the faithful cut timber into blocks, hauled them to a shingle factory a few miles away, then took the shingles to the church and nailed them on the roof. His salary was only $200 a year.

The Rev. Shields drove a new horse and two-wheeled cart to cover the territory in his second charge in 1900. He traveled to Decker Chapel, Carnahan's Schoolhouse, New Bethel across the Wabash River at St. Francesville, Ill., Barakman Chapel five miles east of Vincennes, and in the River Deshee bottoms in the community called "Hell's Neck." The roads were deep with black muck in winter and spring and deep with sand in the summer.

In 1902 he was given five churches in Warrick County and was married. Five years later he had a daughter and five more years later his wife died.

Ordained a minister after a four-year course of study in 1905, he was sent to Freedom, in charge of four churches: Freedom, Oak Grove, New Bethel west of Spencer and Hedding's Chapel, six miles across the White River south of Spencer. At Freedom he conducted 70 funerals, 40 weddings, and baptized 100 in 1910. His annual salary included a house and $600.

A year later he was sent to Riley, where he married Emma Gosnell. Their wedding was conducted on the front porch to accommodate the crowd. He provided a "treat" of half a wagon load of watermelons.

For several years the Ladies Aid Society had been accumulating funds for a new church. They had purchased a full seating of solid oak to put in the old church plus a $300 nest egg. The new church replaced one built by the Christian Church group many years before.

He also was in charge of the Hamilton Church three miles southwest of Riley and the Plymouth Church seven miles northeast. The day of the automobile arrived, and in 1910 there were four such vehicles in Riley Township.

In 1913 the Rev. Shields was sent to Monroe City in Knox County where he became ill in 1915 and left his charge, moving back to a small house on the Gosnell property a mile west of Riley. They lived there four years, and bought a small fruit farm three miles south of Cory.

Even though he was retired until 1920, the Rev. Shields did supply work at the Park Avenue Church in North Terre Haute, Asbury Church just out of Brazil, and the Clay Prairie Church south of Brazil.

The New Light Church was located two miles south of the Gomery Cemetery in the Cory community. Plans were made to move the building to a new site where the the Rev. Shields preached the first funeral, only three-fourths of a mile away.

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√Clark, Dorothy

Old-time religion

Nevins heard the call, preached in 4 counties

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Historically speaking

Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

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Affairs File

David M. Nevins was born in 1828 on a farm in Parke County, Ind., the fifth son of Henry and Sarah (Currens) Nevins who settled on the home farm in the spring of 1823.

David's father, Henry Jr., was the son of Henry Sr. of Scots descent who emigrated from New York to Kentucky Territory during the latter part of the Revolutionary War. Henry Jr. was born in 1791 in what is now Jessamine County, Ky. Until he was 21, he remained on the farm helping his father. On Aug. 10, 1812, he volunteered as a soldier serving under Gen. William Henry Harrison to fight the British and Indians in the west.

After the war, Henry returned to Kentucky and in 1816 married Sarah Currens of Mercer Co., Ky., the daughter of James and Margaret Currens. In the fall of 1821, the young couple moved to Indiana, settling first in Nevins Township, Vigo County.

In 1823 Henry moved to Parke County on Congress land he had purchased for $1.25 an acre. Two of their neighbors were Abel Ball and John Jessup. Jesse Partlow was the district school teacher, and George Snow was another early schoolteacher.

By the time David was 18, his father owned about 700 acres. Some of it was heavily timbered, and the bark for tanning leather was its greatest value. David was chosen by his father to be the son who learned the tanner's trade at Piattsville's tannery run by Joseph and Daniel Vanners. After a year's apprenticeship, his health failed, and he was forced back to his father's farm.

David Nevins was attracted to the career of a preacher by hearing Daniel Medley in a nearby grove, the first preaching held in the New Discovery neighborhood. He was only 5 or 6 years old then in 1833-34.

About this time a brick schoolhouse was built on Marsh Cornelison's land, and the preaching was done there. Very soon a Baptist church was organized by Medley and called New Discovery Baptist Church. The entire Nevins family became members there. Henry Jr. and his wife had 14 children, only three dying as infants.

During a revival in November 1846, David became a candidate for baptism. Late in January 1847, ice was cut in Little Raccoon Creek and he and Nancy Bullington were baptized by Elder P.M. Swaim. The following summer New Discovery Church built its first house of worship.

David became active in the church as a Sunday School teacher. His father offered to send him to Franklin College to become a preacher, but David refused. He wasn't ready. In 1848 he accompanied Deacon James Ball to a protracted meeting held at Liberty Church in the forks of Big and Little Raccoon creeks.

On Aug. 26, 1852, David Nevins married Margaret Adams, the daughter of Eliott and Meriba Adams. He built a house on land given to him by his parents, unimproved with a heavy growth of timber, and he proceeded to fill it with eight children: Cynthia, Ellen, Georgia Ann, Mary Elizabeth, Emma A., Manda E., Clara B., Sarah A., and Louisa May.

By 1855 his desire to preach was growing stronger, and the next year his church gave him a license. They also elected him moderator for the next seven years, until he moved to Vigo County. He received $25 a year to preach at his home church, and he preached regularly at the newly organized Bridgeton Church.

During the winter of 1858, Brother Smock and David Nevins held a protracted meeting with Brother Artis at the Lost Creek Colored Church in Vigo County. Fourteen new members were the result of this revival.

In his autobiographical account written when he was very old, David Nevins told of helping organize the Baptist Church at Waterman, Parke County; preached at Ashboro, Clay County; and organized the church at Hollandsburg in 1858.

While preaching at Goshen, he was called home to find one of his children gravely ill with whooping cough and dying a few days later. The burial was in New Discovery Cemetery.

Nevins preached at Sulphur Springs Church in Vigo County. He visited Wayne Adams, his wife's uncle, while in that neighborhood. In spite of his patriotic beliefs concerning the Civil War, which conflicted with the strong Southern sympathies of Baptists, he was ordained in 1863 by New Discovery Church.

Later that fall he visited Curry's Prairie Association at Mount Pleasant Church, Sullivan County. Impressed with the people he met, he discussed with his wife their

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moving to Vigo County. He bought 40 acres in Honey Creek Township from George and Caroline Stevenson. They sold their property in Parke County, and loaded their household goods into wagons and moved to their new home. The log cabin proved to be too small, so time was spent in making his family more comfortable.

He visited churches at Fairbanks and Mount Zion (where they placed their letters). The next year they visited Union Church, Second Prairie Creek Church, the Township House at Honey Creek, and Friendship Church.

In July, Nevins and two carpenters, Isaac Hipple and Reson Bennet, began work on his new house. On election day he voted for Abraham Lincoln. His memoirs were filled with baptisms, funerals, marriages, visiting the ill, family visits back to Parke County, church activities, and his travels to all Baptist meetings.

In 1864 he sold his land in Parke County to his brothers, William and A.I. Nevins, a total of 160 acres. In 1866 he bought a fruit farm near Terre Haute in the Alga Dean Subdivision, 10 acres for $4,500 from a Mr. Marsh. This was not a successful venture, and in 1868 the family moved back to the Honey Creek farm and rented the fruit farm to a gardener named Peters for three years.

In 1867 he took on the preaching duties at Vermilion, Ill., for $100 a year, traveling back and forth by train. In 1868 he voted for Gen. Grant as president.

His daughter Mary died of consumption brought on by the effects of measles in 1873. He devoted his time to his farm 1874-75 as there was no regular work as a preacher. This was a restless time for the aging Nevins. In 1879 he moved his family to a farm in Clay County known as Reservoir Land and began building a house.

In 1881 the sleigh-riding was so good, it was hard to get people to think on religious subjects and meeting, he complained. He had no regular preaching work in 1882 and 1883, partly due to the financial crisis he thought, but his wife inherited some money from her father's estate, so they invested that in a farm in Honey Creek, where they were still living in 1884.

He reported no work in his memoirs for 1885 and 1886, but in 1887 he was called to be the pastor of Oregon Church and later the Union Church. About this time he had his picture taken, and the last page of the booklet shows an old man with curly white hair and a long, full white beard.

I'm indebted to Lloyd R. Pounds for loaning me his copy of his family's genealogy and local history.